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## Since Cumorah (Since Qumran), Conclusion

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**Abstract:** This series argues that the changing attitudes of biblical scholars toward basic questions about scripture allow room for claims made by the Book of Mormon. It discusses external evidences, the primitive church, Lehi, Zenos, the olive tree, and the Dead Sea Scrolls. The twenty-seventh and final part concludes the series.



The accompanying installment concludes the "Since Cumorah" series by Dr. Nibley, begun in October 1964. Few scholars could have so insightfully and brilliantly acquainted Latter-day Saints with the amazing array of supportive evidence unearthed since disclosure of the ancient Nephite records at Cumorah. Many Era readers will be looking forward to the appearance of this material in book form.

# SINCE CUMORAH

(SINCE QUMRAN)

BY HUGH NIBLEY, PH.D.

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● **Aggiornamento.** The compelling power of ancient voices speaking anew from the dust since Cumorah and especially since Qumran is today driving the whole

Christian world along strange paths. "No one can deny," writes a Methodist scholar with strong Catholic leanings, "that something remarkable is going on in the for-

merly 'unchanging' Roman Catholic Church."<sup>1</sup> Nothing less than a thoroughgoing revamping of doctrines and ordinances is indicated. Restoration and revelation, forbidden words but a decade or so ago, have become the watchwords of a "renewed" Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant.

What is responsible for this astonishing revolution? A Protestant and a Catholic scholar, co-authoring a new book on the liturgical movement, have shown that the initial impulse and continuing pressure behind the movement has been the progressive discovery of increasingly ancient documents opening up step by step new and strange vistas of an ancient Church totally unlike anything that conventional Christianity had imagined.

R. P. Marshall, the Protestant minister, begins by noting that Protestants have been guilty of a systematic neglect of rites and ordinances; indeed, "only in recent years has worship been seriously considered by Protestants as a field for study. . . ."<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the Catholic writer, M. J. Taylor, S.J., notes that the rites of the Roman Church have long since become all but meaningless for the people: "Men seem unable to leave well enough alone. They want to add to what tradition has given them." Such additions "made for a sense of spectacle. . . . In the liturgies where bishops and the popes were celebrants the chants became almost symphonic. . . . The people, unable to participate in the musical supports to these rites, surrendered their role to the choir."<sup>3</sup> That is, both Catholic and Protestant authorities admit that their churches are today far removed



from the original rites of the Church, a return to which is the purpose of the so-called liturgical movement, "a practical effort . . . to renew the lives of all the faithful here and now through a revived liturgy."<sup>1</sup> And this is where the voices from the dust come in, for the movement began with those "patristic and liturgical studies" which sought the true nature of the liturgy in the oldest available documents.<sup>4</sup>

Dom Gueranger (1805-1875) of the monastery of Solesmes started the movement, but though he "thought it necessary to go back to the past . . . he lacked the historical documents" necessary to take him far enough. Hence, "his renewal went back to a time when the Roman liturgy was not at its best."<sup>5</sup>

The greatest advance was made in Germany at the Monastery of Maria Laach, which "made an immeasurable contribution to the liturgical movement in its scholarly liturgical studies" and "produced . . . ample historical justification for . . . reform."<sup>6</sup> In short the unearthing of old documents or "historical studies (doctrinal, liturgical, and pastoral) made it quite clear that our present liturgy was not in the best of health."<sup>7</sup> Without such documents none would have suspected the need of going "back to the earlier tradition, . . . a return to tradition to overcome defects of the present."<sup>7</sup> The same need is now felt by many Protestants, and for them too, "the liturgical movement has sought the aid of history and theology in the study of the rites." "Catholics and Protestants," Marshall concludes, "must recover what they have lost, and one cannot cast blame on the other."<sup>8</sup>

As everyone knows, the world

was mightily offended by the assertion of the Latter-day Saints that the Christians had lost many of the ancient rites and ordinances and was scandalized and amused by their preoccupation with rites and ordinances that they considered essential to salvation.

Today the Christian world both admits serious losses and seeks to fill the gap by going back to long-forgotten writings, the oldest and most important of which have come forth literally from the dust in our own time. This astonishing turn of things can be illustrated by utterances, characteristically frank and scholarly, of the present pope, Paul VI. "Now everything is new, surprising, changed," he writes of the liturgy; "even the ringing of the bells at the Sanctus has been done away with."<sup>9</sup> *Everything* new and changed! That is surprising indeed, but there is a reason: "We are concerned," wrote the Pope in his First Encyclical, "to restore to the Church that ideal of perfection and beauty that corresponds to its original image . . . [and have] the desire of renewing the whole structure of the Church."<sup>10</sup>

When Mormons have spoken of a restoration of the gospel, other Christians have been quick to take offense and demand in outraged tones, "Restoration? When was it ever lost?" But now no less a person than the Pope of Rome declares that there must be a restoration affecting "the whole structure of the Church"! He speaks of "the great spiritual renewal which the Second Vatican Council hopes to promote" and champions "the Church's heroic and impatient struggle for renewal: the struggle to correct the flaws introduced by its members."<sup>11</sup> The Church "today

. . . is examining herself and formulating the things which Christ, her founder, thought and willed concerning her. . . . The Church must now define her own nature. . . . In this way the Church will complete the doctrinal work which the First Vatican Council intended to enunciate."<sup>12</sup>

To one familiar with the Catholic polemic of bygone years with its pounding emphasis on the great, monolithic, unchanging, universal, victorious Church, all this sounds very new, surprising, and changed indeed. Isn't it rather late in the day to try to decide what the Church is all about? There must be some good reason for such a drastic and abrupt change of viewpoint, and the cause is not far to seek—new discoveries of old documents are confronting the world with an image of the early Church that is totally different from all former imaginings, but an image to which the present Christian world must somehow manage to adjust. That is not the whole story, but as in the liturgical movement in general, it is undoubtedly the prime mover.

The voice of Qumran seems to echo in the terms by which the present pope and the council choose to designate the Church: "The People of God," "The New Israel," "The Wayfaring Church" elicit the image of Israel in the desert, the small band of faithful saints that "sometimes looks like a small flock."<sup>13</sup> "The Church has turned a corner," writes the editor of the *Catholic World*. "Today we belong to a Church which has defined itself as the People of God. . . . We live in an age of renewed attention to the charismatic gifts of the (Continued on page 1162)

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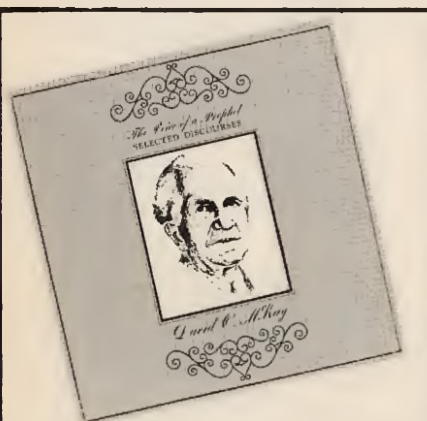
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*Since Cumorah*  
(Continued from page 1085)

Holy Spirit bestowed on every baptized person with the 'right and duty' to use these gifts for the building up of the Body of Christ."<sup>14</sup>

Eduard Meyer noted long ago that one of the unique aspects of Mormonism, setting it off completely from all other religions, was the idea of a continuation of the charismatic gifts as shared by all members.<sup>15</sup> The "right and duty" in our quotation refers to the new Catholic policy of "every member a missionary": "It pleases us that the text [of the Council schema] constantly demands that the entire Church be missionary, and also that each member of the faithful, insofar as possible, become in spirit and in works a missionary."<sup>16</sup>

There is much talk now in both Protestant and Catholic journals of revelation and inspiration—need we remind the reader that from the beginning its claim to continuing revelation was considered to be the most obnoxious and dangerous aspect of Mormonism?<sup>17</sup> Father Latourelle notes that the Second Vatican Council is the very first time a council of the church has ever methodically considered the basic foundations of revelation, tradition, and inspiration.<sup>18</sup> And now we are told that "when either the Roman Pontiff or the body of bishops in conjunction with him defines a proposition, they propound it in connection with revelation," so that "all are bound to abide by, and conform to, this Revelation. . . ."<sup>19</sup> Infallibility, we are told, "is co-extensive with the deposit of divine revelation," i.e., the words of the Bible as "propounded with the assistance of the Holy Spirit. . . ."

Reversing the argument of Tertullian, the Pope proves the presence of the Holy Spirit by the existence of the Church, instead of

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*vice versa*: "But if the Church is here, the Holy Spirit is also here, the Paraclete," so that "the Church can never fail to give assent to these definitions because of the activity of the Holy Spirit."<sup>20</sup>

The cornerstone of authority is now revelation and the Holy Spirit. But it was not always so. Whatever became of scholastic philosophy, the proudest and greatest achievement of the Roman Church, which up until now has been officially designated as the one proper key to revelation, i.e., to the deposit of the scriptures?<sup>21</sup> Now, however, revelation itself is something more than the word of God in the Bible; official statements are now to be considered as made somehow "in connection with revelation." Today scholasticism is out, and direct revelation is cautiously taking over. The present pope even refers to one of his predecessors, Pius XII, clearly but with careful indirection, as a prophet, one who spoke in "solemn tones like the voice of the Prophet of God and the Father of the World."<sup>22</sup>

The role of new documentary discoveries in bringing these strange changes about is evident from a number of papal utterances. "The Pope [Pius XII] recognizes that recent explorations, methods, diggings, texts, inscriptions, papyri, codexes, ruins, etc., have *entirely changed* the problems of Biblical exegesis in the last fifty years" (*italics added*), and he calls for intensified "search for the original texts, and a new scientific Catholic method of exegesis."<sup>23</sup>

Noting that "even such illustrious commentators as St. Jerome sometimes had relatively little success in explaining more difficult questions" of scripture, the present Pope suggests "General Rules for the Exegete," requiring "appropriate use of the new exegetical techniques, particularly those advocated by the historical method

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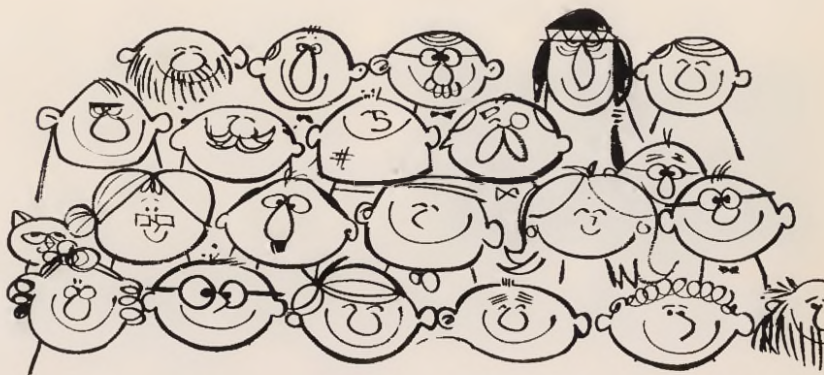
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taken as a whole . . . relying on the help of textual criticism, literary criticism, and linguistic knowledge." He emphasizes the importance of "the sound findings of recent investigations," and allows that "the Catholic exegete can and should be free to exercise his own perspicacity and intelligence. Only in this way will each person . . . contribute to the continuing progress of the sacred doctrine."<sup>24</sup>

Though this apparent freedom of investigation is actually to be under the strict surveillance of the "living magisterium" of the Church and "subject to the authority and jurisdiction of the Ordinaries,"<sup>25</sup> still it is the scholars with their "diggings, texts, inscriptions," etc., who furnish the information necessary to decide what the teachings and rites of the Church should be.

It is astonishing how many of the changes that are taking place in Catholic and Protestant doctrines and ordinances are in the direction of those very things that have heretofore been peculiar to Mormonism and that have always brought persecution and derision on the heads of the Saints in the past. This may be shown by a glance at the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, published by the Second Vatican Council on November 25, 1965.<sup>26</sup>

The first section is headed "The Father's Plan" and speaks of the gospel in terms of a plan going back to the pre-existence. The second chapter is entitled "The People of God," and in the section headed "A Chosen People," presents us with that new image of the church so startlingly different from the one that has been diligently cultivated since the Fathers of the fourth century, as it shows us "the new Israel, journeying in the present world. . . moving forward through temptations and trials. . ."

The next section is headed "A Priestly People," and teaches that

"the common priesthood of the faithful" is "in its own distinctive way a participation in the one priesthood of Christ. . ." The next section announces that all must through the sacraments (ordinances) be "reborn as sons of God." Next we learn that "the Holy People of God also share in Christ's prophetic office by bearing living witness to Him." This calls (in the next section) for the gifts of the Spirit, which should be widely enjoyed in the Church. The next section calls upon all to be missionaries.

Chapter VII has a title that would have shocked any church historian a few years back, when church and eschatology were held to be diametrically opposed to each other<sup>27</sup>: "The Eschatological Character of the Wayfaring Church and its Union with the Heavenly Church." It was just this sort of talk that St. Augustine and his contemporaries effectively put an end to; for him and his scholastic successors (who hardly receive any notice at all in the new order of things) the Church on earth *was* the eschatological and heavenly Church.<sup>28</sup> But now it is a different story as we are whisked off to Qumran to see a little band of "saints," scorned and rejected by the world, living in expectation of the coming Lord at the end of the times: "The final age of the world has already come upon us," the chapter begins, informing us that "until the appearance of new heavens and a new earth in which justice dwells, the wayfaring Church . . . wears the ephemeral look of this world."

So now the Universal Church, militant and triumphant, established once for all to remain (according to the formula of the former Vatican Council) "firm and steadfast until the end of the world" has taken on "the ephemeral look of this world"! Nay, for all its resounding claims "the



Catholicity of the Church is always enormously deficient."<sup>29</sup>

The Christian world cannot be wholly unaware of moving in the direction of things that they mocked and derided when voices first spoke from Cumorah. One indication of this is the observation of one of the foremost Catholic authorities on the Dead Sea Scrolls, in one of the first and best books ever to appear on the subject, that the correct title for the community at Qumran should be Latter-day Saints, but that the title could not be used because unfortunately it had been preempted by "a so-called Christian sect."<sup>30</sup>

### (Conclusion)

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>29</sup>R. P. Marshall with M. J. Taylor, S.J., *Liturgy and Christian Unity* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965), p. 43.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 38, 10. Cf. p. 47: "Now we are seeking to recover the lost radiance of the Christian religion."

<sup>37</sup>Address by Pope Paul VI, delivered March 17, 1965, and printed in *The Pope Speaks*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (1965), p. 343.

<sup>38</sup>Quoted in *The Pope Speaks*, same issue as footnote 9 above, p. 269. Cf. p. 345, "this new liturgy, this spiritual rebirth. . ."

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 51, 256, respectively.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 108-9.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 365.

<sup>42</sup>R. M. Brown, editorial in *The Catholic World*, March 1966, p. 341.

<sup>43</sup>Ed. Meyer, *Ursprung und Geschichte der Mormonen* (Berlin, 1912), pp. 80-81.

<sup>44</sup>In *The Pope Speaks*, 10 (1964), p. 2.

<sup>45</sup>See our "Mixed Voices" in *The Improvement Era*, Vol. 62 (1959), pp. 145ff, 185, 388-90, 501f.

<sup>46</sup>R. Latourelle, "Le Revelation et sa transmission selon la Constitution 'Dei verbum,'" in *Gregorianum*, 47 (1966), p. 36.

<sup>47</sup>From the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* (De Ecclesia), published in *The Pope Speaks*, 10 (1965), p. 376.

<sup>48</sup>*The Pope Speaks*, 10 (1965), pp. 107, 376, 260. Cf. Tertullian *De pudicitia* xxi, in Migne, *Patrol. Lat.*, 2:1077-1080.

<sup>49</sup>See the discussion in M. Grabmann, *Geschichte der scholastischen Methode* (Graz, 1957), I, 4-28. The Dogmatic Constitution issued by the First Vatican Council, April 24, 1870, declared scholasticism to be "for all time the classic form of Catholic systematics." *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>50</sup>In *The Pope Speaks*, 10 (1964), p. 31.

<sup>51</sup>Cit. A. Bea, in *Biblica*, 24:315-316.

<sup>52</sup>See "General Guidelines for the Exegete," in *The Pope Speaks*, 10 (1964), pp. 87-89. Cf. *Ibid.*, 10 (1965), p. 261.

<sup>53</sup>*The Pope Speaks*, 10 (1964), pp. 90, 19-22.

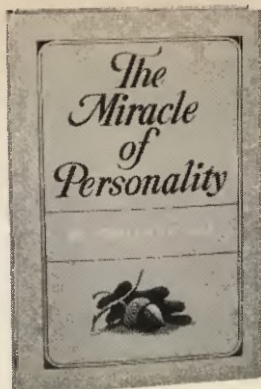
<sup>54</sup>See above, Note 19.

<sup>55</sup>The "rediscovery of the importance of eschatology within the New Testament" has taken place only in recent years. C. H. Dahl, in W. Davies & D. Daube, *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology* (Cambridge University, 1956), p. 422.

<sup>56</sup>Discussed by Paul Tillich, in *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie*, 3 (1961), pp. 237-8.

<sup>57</sup>*The Pope Speaks*, 10 (1964), p. 80.

<sup>58</sup>Georg Molin, *Die Söhne des Lichts* (Vienna: Herold, 1954), p. 146; see our summary in *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1964), pp. 153-4.



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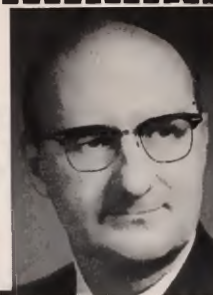
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